

June 26, 2014 - Auburn - This week the Bear Yuba Land Trust (BYLT) acquired 2,707 acres in Nevada and Yuba Counties - including six miles of Yuba River frontage - known as Rice's Crossing.



View of the Rice's Crossing property. Photo courtesy of the Bear Yuba Land Trust.

The \$3.25 million acquisition was funded by Proposition 84 funds from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (\$1M) and the California Natural Resources Agency's River Parkway Program (\$1.9M), in addition to funding from the CalTrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (\$350K). The Sierra Fund has also remained a key project supporter and fiscal agent from beginning to end.

"Protecting the lands that provide more than 60 percent of California's developed water supply is a primary focus for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy," said Bob Kingman, Sierra Nevada Conservancy Program Manager. "This project supports that goal and will provide the public access to a beautiful stretch of river."

Sandwiched between existing public lands at both ends, the property begins below New Bullard's Bar Dam and the confluence of the North and Middle forks of the Yuba River. In total, the Rice's Crossing landscape connects to nine river miles of adjacent public lands. The resulting 15 miles of this critical Sierra foothills river flows through over 8,400 acres of now-contiguous public open space along the Yuba River watershed.

"The entire Yuba watershed comes together here and will be protected forever," said BYLT Executive Director Marty Coleman-Hunt. "We are so grateful to our project partner, The Trust for Public Land, and the funders for working so hard to make this dream a reality."

An estimated 250,000 people visit and enjoy the Yuba River every year. The acquisition and protection of Rice's Crossing will make open space and river access points available along a six-mile stretch of the Yuba River which was previously private property and closed to the public. BYLT is working to open sections of the landscape in stages to the public as soon as possible.

Rice's Crossing will offer miles of outstanding river corridor and river canyon ridge trails for mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking. Eventually, these trails will provide connectivity to public lands in South Yuba River State Park, Plumas National Forest, New Bullard's Bar Recreation Area, and Tahoe National Forest. Other adjacent public land owners include the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Land Management, and Yuba County Water Agency.

In addition to public access, the Land Trust acquisition of Rice's Crossing will pave the way for restoration of wildlife corridors and important river fish habitat disrupted by historic dam building and mining. Sustainable timber harvests and cattle grazing will play an important role in land stewardship.

The land deal brings the community-supported nonprofit group's total conserved acreage within the Bear River and Yuba River watersheds to nearly 9,000 acres.

About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Created in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a state agency whose mission is to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC has awarded over \$50 million in grants for projects to protect and enhance the health of California's primary watersheds by improving forest health, remediating mercury contamination from abandoned mines, protecting critical natural resources and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006.